

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A fuel cell disassembly method of disassembling a fuel cell where a pair of separators arranged across an electrode assembly are bonded to each other via an adhesive layer, said fuel cell disassembly method comprising:

a separation facilitating step of causing external heating means to apply heat to the adhesive layer, so as to soften or melt the adhesive layer and thereby facilitate separation of the pair of separators from each other;

an external force application step of applying an external force by an external force application means in a direction of mutually parting the pair of separators; and

a heating step of heating the external force application means by the external heating means.

2. (Original) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said separation facilitating step locates the external heating means to be in contact with or close to at least one of the separators.

3. (Previously Presented) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said separation facilitating step locates the external heating means to cover over a gap between the pair of separators.

4. (Previously Presented) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said separation facilitating step locates the external heating means along the adhesive layer.

5. (Previously Presented) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said separation facilitating step causes the external heating means to apply

heat to the adhesive layer to be not lower than a softening temperature of the adhesive layer but lower than an upper temperature limit of the electrode assembly.

6. (Currently Amended) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said separation facilitating step causes the external heating means to apply heat to the adhesive layer, while ~~an~~ the external force is applied by the external force application means in ~~a~~ the direction of mutually parting the pair of separators.

7. (Original) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 6, wherein the external force application means in said separation facilitating step comprises a wedge-like member pressed in a direction of insertion into a gap between the pair of separators.

8. (Previously Presented) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 7, wherein said separation facilitating step inserts the external force application means into the gap between the pair of separators, while the external force application means is heated by the external heating means.

9. (Original) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 6, wherein the external force application means in said separation facilitating step applies the external force to an extension of one of the separators to separate one of the separators from the other of the separators.

10. (Currently Amended) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 1, wherein said separation facilitating step causes the external heating means to apply heat to the adhesive layer while applying ~~an~~ the external force in ~~a~~ the direction of mutually parting the pair of separators.

11. (Previously Presented) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the adhesive layer is arranged around periphery of the electrode assembly and has a sealing function to prevent leakage of a gas fed to the electrode assembly.

12. (Previously Presented) A fuel cell disassembly method in accordance with claim 1, wherein plurality of the fuel cells are layered to form a fuel cell stack, and
said separation facilitating step causes the external heating means to additionally apply heat to an inter-cell adhesive layer that bonds adjoining fuel cells to each other directly or indirectly via an intermediate in the fuel cell stack, so as to soften or melt the inter-cell adhesive layer and thereby facilitate separation of the adjoining fuel cells.

13. (Currently Amended) A fuel cell stack disassembly method of disassembling a fuel cell stack having an inter-cell adhesive layer that bonds adjoining fuel cells to each other directly or indirectly via an intermediate, said fuel cell stack disassembly method comprising:

a separation facilitating step of causing external heating means to apply heat to the inter-cell adhesive layer, so as to soften or melt the inter-cell adhesive layer and thereby facilitate separation of the adjoining fuel cells;

an external force application step of applying an external force by an external force application means in a direction of mutually parting the pair of separators; and

a heating step of heating the external force application means by the external heating means.

14-25. (Canceled)